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May 22, 1995

Dear Betty:

Oh, where to begin.

One, I'm sorry it's taken so long to respond to your questions about journalism courses. Our lives have been disrupted, happily I hope, by the prospect of returning to the Bay area before the end of the year. Xiaoyan has the chance to move west and keep her job, an opportunity I find too good to resist. First, we have to sell a co-op apartment here and buy a house there, two of my least favorite activities, coast-to-coast stress guarenteed.

Two, especially in local TV news but by no means exonerating the networks or for that matter print, it too often seems like a lost cause. (I've just finished reading Neil Gabler's Winchell and I'm struck by how some basic issues of print journalism in the 30's and 40's parallel issues of broadcast journalism in the 80's and 90's. Now I'm reading Thomas Griffith's Harry & Teddy (Luce and White) which includes the advice given Luce at Yale by Thornton Wilder's father: "Don't go into journalism. It will turn you into a cynic. It will corrupt and corrode you. It will turn your wine into vinegar. You will lose your soul."

That said, I will take you at your word and offer the following comments without regard to coherence, relevance or neatness:

1. It is not enough to teach the mechanics, the craft alone. Journalism education cannot be the moral equivalent of auto shop. As I was known to mutter on occasion, (Stanford) is not a trade school (or, shouldn't be).

2. How do you teach ethics, integrity, vision, mission, trust, taste? I'm not sure but in trying I would stress assignments that test judgement, that raise issues of fairness, balance, and just plain getting the facts straight.

3. Stimulate analysis of what's being done now and how it affects our understanding and knowledge of events and issues, how it affects society, community, the profession itself.

4. Confront students with choices -- news choices, policy decisions, deadline pressures. Make them consider the options and their consequences. Make them defend their methods as well

as their facts.

5. There is a history of reporting, both in print and in broadcast, and it should be used instructively - - case studies that analyze decisions made, methods used, and their consequences. There's also a history of the issues raised by reporting -- what, exactly, is the public's right to know; to know what, about whom?

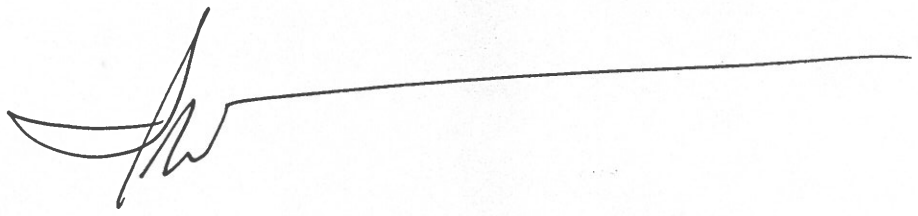
6. What about perspective, context, background -- what are the goals and responsibilities of the reporter in a world that only gets more complicated; and, for that matter, the limitations of a profession that is increasingly fragmented?

7. There's a need for more inter-disciplinary study -- requirements in history, political science, economics, religion, international relations, language.

8. There's the never-ending need to stress the importance of writing -- good, clean, clear, structured, unbiased -- in broadcasting as well as print.

But you know all this, of course, and much more. Our very best to you and John. It will be nice to see you, before too long we hope.

With warm regards,



A Study of Journalism Education

Sponsored by THE FREEDOM FORUM FREE PRESS, FREE SPEECH, FREE SPIRIT
Conducted by Betty Medsger, Professor Emerita, former chair, Journalism Department, San Francisco State University

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March 28, 1995

To: People who think about the qualtiy and future of journalism and journalism education

From: Betty Medsger

This is a request for your insights, concerns and recommendations.

I have been asked by The Freedom Forum to conduct a national study of journalism education. The goals of the study are to discover the strengths and weaknesses of journalism education and to learn how journalism education may need to change in order to

- serve the journalism profession more adequately
- help the profession better fulfill its responsibility to inform the public and
- become a more respected academic discipline.

Though I have ideas about what should be explored in such a study, I very much want my ideas and plans enriched by others' insights. I am asking you and numerous other journalism educators and journalists for assistance. In the midst of your very busy schedule, please take time to respond to the questions below. Feel free to make any other observations you think would be helpful to such a study.

To improve the quality of journalism education in ways that will lead to the improvement of journalism:

- What questions need to be asked about journalism and/or journalism education?
- What changes need to be made in journalism education?

If you wish, please copy this memo and share it with colleagues who might want to respond. There's no need to be formal. Quick lists, notes, memos or letters will be appreciated. Note below the ways you may correspond with me -- mail, fax, e-mail. Please **respond soon**. Thanks in advance for your time and wisdom.

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